

HAITI EARTHQUAKE

HON. YVETTE D. CLARKE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 16, 2010

Ms. CLARKE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the plight of Haiti. As we all know, Haiti suffered a devastating earthquake in January 2010. The magnitude 7 quake claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Haitians, displaced over a million and left the capital of Port-au-Prince and outlying country areas in ruins.

Haiti's road to recovery has been long and arduous. Despite overwhelming support from the international community, the success of redevelopment and rebuilding efforts has been extremely limited. Even today, thousands remain in international displacement camps, many overrun with disease and violence. To date, more than a thousand have died due to the cholera outbreak. Even more continue to suffer in unspeakable poverty and squalor.

One of the strongest obstacles to meaningful recovery in Haiti has been a political environment long plagued with corruption and dishonesty. Despite the presence of over 100 observers, Haiti's presidential election two Sundays ago was overrun with allegations of fraud and overtly questionable practices. It is my hope that the election results are indeed as accurate as possible and that the former First Lady Mirlande Manigat and ruling party candidate Jude Celestin are the true, democratically elected candidates to participate in the Presidential run-off.

Although Haiti experienced numerous political and economic problems prior to the earthquake, the current level of challenges the Haitian people are facing is no longer tolerable. The United States and the international community cannot continue to accept the pace at which Haiti's recovery is taking place, while human lives are at stake. We can all do better, and to choose complacency over deliberate action would be a grave insult to humanity.

As we approach a new year and a new Congress, I urge my colleagues to never forget Haiti and the challenges its people continue to face. As the Representative of a large Caribbean-American constituency and as a daughter of Caribbean, Haiti has always been close to my heart. However, my commitment to helping Haiti does not solely come from my constituency or my familial background. It comes from my identity as a public servant and a citizen of the world. In all of my work, I will continue to give the people of Haiti a voice. I will not give up until my colleagues recognize Haiti and Haiti resurges as the pearl of the Caribbean once again.

Let us never forget that as we unite with the people of Haiti, Haitian-Americans and the Haitian Diaspora to assist with the development of this great nation, we are forever guided by the words etched indelibly on the Haitian flag, 'L'Union fait la force' (Loon yon fe la force) . . . through unity, there is strength!

SUPPORTING A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION TO THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

SPEECH OF

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, December 15, 2010

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, 17 years have passed since the signing of the Oslo Peace Accords in 1993, but a final resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has yet to be achieved.

The question is: Why?

Only by first understanding the reasons that the conflict continues, can the United States set and implement a policy that can help to encourage a true and lasting peace.

So let us consider the conduct of both sides.

One Israeli government after another has been willing and able to make painful sacrifices, including territorial withdrawals, to achieve peace.

As Secretary of State Clinton has noted, the current Israeli government has made unprecedented concessions in pursuit of peace, including a ten-month moratorium on housing construction in the West Bank in order to encourage the Palestinians to negotiate directly with Israel.

In short, Israel has proven its commitment to peace.

However, Mr. Speaker, Israel does not seem to have a partner in this endeavor.

Palestinian leaders still never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity, and continue to default on their international obligations.

They continue to refuse to negotiate directly with Israel, without preconditions.

Instead of encouraging the Palestinian people to accept Israel as a permanent neighbor with whom they should live in peace, the leaders in Ramallah continue to tolerate, encourage, and even participate in anti-Israel incitement.

They continue to refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist as a democratic, Jewish state.

Even as the Palestinian leadership seeks a state for the Palestinian people, it would deny the right of the Jewish people to a state in their own homeland.

We are not talking about isolated, fringe elements.

Palestinian rejectionism and non-compliance flows from the very top.

Earlier this year, the leader of the Palestinian Authority and the PLO, Abu Mazen, praised the recently-deceased mastermind of the PLO's massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics.

Abu Mazen also expressed what he called his "firm rejection of the so-called Jewishness of the state [of Israel]," saying that "This issue is over for us; we have not and will not recognize it."

Last year, Abu Mazen said that "Presently, we are against armed struggle, because we cannot cope with it. But things could be different at some future phase."

And a former PA foreign minister and senior associate of Abu Mazen has announced that the PA would be intensifying its diplomatic and economic offensive against Israel, with the aims of isolating Israel, preventing it from building its ties with the European Union, and expelling Israel from the U.N.

Already, the PA tried—unsuccessfully—to block Israel's candidacy for membership in the OECD.

And now, instead of sitting down with the Israeli government to negotiate directly, the Palestinian leadership is conducting an extensive campaign to seek recognition of a Palestinian state by foreign governments and within the U.N. and other international organizations.

Unfortunately, in response to a request from Abu Mazen, the Brazilian government recently agreed to recognize a Palestinian state, instead of urging the Palestinians to fulfill their commitments.

The governments of Argentina and Uruguay have also indicated that they intend to recognize a Palestinian state.

The Palestinian leadership is aggressively lobbying other nations to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partner for peace.

But as we've seen over and over, Palestinian leaders are not going to make the tough decisions and change their ways unless they have to.

By providing over \$2 billion in assistance in the last five years alone—with hundreds of millions more planned—the U.S. is only rewarding and reinforcing bad behavior by Ramallah.

Enough is enough.

We should finally hold PA leaders accountable, which is why I will soon introduce legislation to clarify and tighten existing U.S. laws that deny funding to the PA until they meet their commitments.

The Administration should also reverse its decision to allow the PLO office in DC to call itself a "General Delegation" and to fly the Palestinian flag.

That decision sent the wrong signal to other governments, who concluded they should also upgrade the PLO's status in their countries.

Furthermore, the U.S. should stop pressuring the Israeli government to make more and more concessions, and must not attempt to impose the terms of a solution.

Mr. Speaker, I will support the resolution before us because it reinforces Congressional opposition to unilateral efforts by Palestinian leaders to gain recognition from other governments or within the U.N.

I would draw particular attention to the fact that the resolution calls on the Administration to publicly affirm that it will: deny recognition to any unilaterally declared Palestinian state; and veto any U.N. Security Council resolution to establish or recognize a Palestinian state.

The Administration must also oppose efforts by the Palestinians to seek recognition from, or membership in, any international organizations.

I would like to thank my distinguished colleague from Texas, Congressman Poe, for introducing the resolution that served as the basis for the measure before us today.

Judge Poe went out of his way to ensure that his resolution was fully bipartisan, securing the support of many Democrat cosponsors, including my distinguished colleague from Nevada, Ms. BERKLEY.

We had requested that the Poe-Berkley resolution be considered on the floor.

Regrettably, the Majority decided to introduce a new resolution on this issue instead.

Supporting the pursuit of Middle East peace, and supporting our ally Israel, is one area that has strong bipartisan support in Congress, and by and large, the text of this resolution reflects that bipartisanship.